

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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TAGS: CASC, BR

SUBJECT: SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS

REF: BRASILIA 9820

1. SUMMARY. INTERIOR MINISTER RANGEL REIS DECEMBER 19-20 HAS REAFFIRMED THAT FUNAI (NATIONAL FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN) WILL NOT RENEW ITS CONTRACT WITH SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LIGUISTICS FOR LINGUISTIC RESEARCH ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES (REFTEL) BUT HAS LEFT OPEN POSSIBILITY THAT INTERIOR OR EDUCATION MINISTRY MIGHT CONTRACT THE SIL TO TRAIN BRAZILIAN LINGUISTS UNDER GOB SUPERVISION. CONSENSUS OF RECENT MEETING OF GOVERNMENT AND ACADEMIC LINGUISTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS IS THAT GOB HAS NEITHER FUNDS NOR TRAINED PERSONNEL TO REPLACE SIL IN LATTER'S WORK WITH INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, BRAZILIAN INTERIOR MINISTER RANGEL REIS HAS REITERATED THAT THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN (FUNAI) WILL NOT RPT NOT RENEW ITS CONTRACT WITH THE SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS FOR LINGUISTIC RESEARCH WITH THE TRIBES ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES.

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SPEAKING AT A CONFERENCE OF GOVERNMENT AND ACADEMIC TECHNICIANS, ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND LINGUISTS MEETING IN BRASILIA ON DECEMBER 19-20 TO DISCUSS BILINGUAL EDUCATION FOR BRAZILIAN INDIAN POPULATION, HOWEVER, RANGEL DID NOT RULE OUT FURTHER GOB-SIL COOPERATION. AFTER STATING THE NECESSITY OF DEVELOPING A PLAN -- ADMINISTERED ENTIRELY BY BRAZILIANS -- FOR THE EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION INTO THE LARGER

BRAZILIAN SOCIETY, THE INTERIOR MINISTER REPORTEDLY STATED THAT HE WAS NOT IPSO FACTO OPPOSED TO THE PARTICIPATION OF FOREIGN SPECIALISTS AND TECHNICIANS, AS LONG AS THEY "INTEGRATE THEMSELVES INTO A PLAN ELABORATED AND ORIENTED BY BRAZILIANS." FUNAI PRESIDENT GENERAL ISMARTH DE OLIVEIRA LATER REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT BOTH THE INTERIOR AND EDUCATION MINISTRIES WERE CONSIDERING VARIOUS OPTIONS FOR TRAINING BRAZILIAN LINGUISTS TO WORK WITH THE INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS; HE INDICATED THAT SOME SIL PERSONNEL, OR THE INSTITUTE ITSELF, MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BE CONTRACTED FOR THESE TRAINING PURPOSES.

3. THE CONSENSUS OF THOSE ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE WAS THAT FUNAI AT THIS TIME HAS NEITHER THE MATERIAL RESOURCES NOR THE TRAINED PERSONNEL TO REPLACE THE SIL MEMBERS ORDERED TO LEAVE INDIGENOUS AREAS BY DECEMBER 31. THIS, ACCORDING TO GENERAL ISMARTH, REPRESENTS "A GREAT CHALLENGE." SEVERAL ACADEMICS ATTENDING THE CONFERENCE, HOWEVER -- IN PARTICULAR LINGUISTICS PROFESSOR ARION RODRIGUES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMPINAS -- WERE CITED BY PRESS AS SAYING THAT A MORE GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF SIL PERSONNEL WOULD HAVE BEEN PREFERABLE, POINTING OUT THAT THE INDIANS WILL NOW BE COMPLETELY WITHOUT THE MEDICAL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE THEY FORMERLY RECEIVED FROM THE SIL.

4. NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS ALSO RELATED THAT SEVERAL INDIAN GROUPS HAVE ALSO PROTESTED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO NOT RENEW ITS CONTRACT WITH THE SIL; ONE TRIBE WENT SO FAR AS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO SEND A LETTER (IN THEIR DIALECT) TO PRESIDENT GEISEL REQUESTING THAT HE RECONSIDER THE DECISION. THE SIL'S WORK WAS ALSO DEFENDED BY THE PROTOCOL CHIEF OF THE STATE OF MATO GROSSO (WHEREIN RESIDE A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIAN TRIBES) AND FEDERAL DEPUTY (MDB AMAZONAS) ANTUNES DE OLIVEIRA, WHO OPINED THAT MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION WITHIN FUNAI TO THE SIL WAS THE RESULT OF JEALOUSY. THIS ALLEGATION WAS REJECTED BY FAMED "SERTANISTA" (BACKWOODSMAN) AND ANTHROPOLOGIST ORLANDO VILLAS BOAS, WHO ADDED THAT HE OPPOSED ALLOWING ANY MISSIONARY GROUPS TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION.

5. COMMENT: GIVEN THE PAUCITY OF TRAINED BRAZILIAN LINGUISTS AT THIS TIME, IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THE GOB WILL ALLOW THE SIL TO CONTINUE ITS WORK IN BRAZIL IN AN ADVISORY/INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY. THIS WORK WOULD BE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A GOB-ADMINISTERED PROGRAM AND WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT INCLUDE DIRECT SIL CONTACT WITH THE ABORIGINAL POPULATION. MOREOVER, THE GOB PROGRAM WOULD PLACE ITS EMPHASIS ON TEACHING PORTUGUESE TO THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION, IN CONTRAST TO THE SIL'S EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TOWARD DEVELOPING WRITTEN FORMS OF THE NATIVE LANGUAGES. (IN THE PAST, FUNAI HAD COMPLAINED THAT THE SIL DEVOTED TOO MUCH OF ITS PROGRAM TOWARD THE NATIVE LANGUAGE AND

NOT ENOUGH TOWARD TEACHING PORTUGUESE, THEREBY ALLEGEDLY RE-
INFORCING THE INDIANS' SEPARATION FROM RATHER THAN PROMOTING
THEIR RAPID INTEGRATION INTO THE LARGER BRAZILIAN SOCIETY.)

6. WE UNDERSTAND FROM RIO BASED TIME STRINGER AT MEETING THAT
NEXT ISSUE OF TIME MAGAZINE WILL INCLUDE PIECE ON SIL. ON
BASIS OF BRIEF SOCIAL CONTACT WITH FEW SILERS, WE THINK MEETING
AND RANGEL'S STATEMENTS WENT DOWN WELL WITH SIL PERSONNEL.
ONE TOLD REPORTED OFFICER DECEMBER 20 THIS WAS FIRST OCCASION
RANGEL HAD TO HEAR POSITIVE BRAZILIAN COMMENT ABOUT SIL'S WORK
HERE. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND FROM ANOTHER MISSIONARY SOURCE THAT
SIL IS CONSIDERING ACTIVATING LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN TO
GOVERNMENT LEADERS AMONG ITS NUMEROUS DONORS IN CONGREGATIONS
THROUGHOUT THE US. END COMMENT.
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